

was a Scripps Howard News Service story just yesterday, "Vandalism Rising At Veterans Cemeteries." Coincidentally, Mr. Speaker, of course, to the passage of the bill today, but very pertinent in terms of asking the Members to support it. The story says, in part, "Lawmakers hope President Clinton will sign the bill into law on Veterans Day, on Tuesday."

I want to indicate that under the sentencing guidelines which I mentioned, in case it has not been made a part of the RECORD, it gives guidelines to the judges, directing them to increase the penalties for convictions of theft and vandalism at the national cemeteries. The measure before us would set prison terms for up to 10 years for anyone convicted of vandalism causing more than \$1,000 damage and up to 15 years for thefts at the national cemeteries.

I would like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by indicating that today we are voting to send that message that we will not forget the sacrifices made by those who made the ultimate sacrifice and that we will not tolerate further desecration of our Nation's cemeteries.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN].

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Veterans Cemetery Protection Act. I commend the gentleman from California [Mr. CALVERT] and the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] and the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] for bringing this measure to the floor at this time.

This bill tightens penalties for any offense against properties of national veterans' cemeteries. Current statutes do not include any sentencing guidelines for theft, vandalism, or desecration of national cemeteries, only generic provisions against damaging Federal property.

In the wake of several incidents of theft, vandalism, and desecration, as has been enumerated by our colleagues today, at national cemeteries last year in California, Hawaii, New Jersey, and other States, I think it is appropriate that we penalize those who have perpetrated these acts of crime to deter this kind of reprehensible behavior. We owe no less to those who gave so much for all of us.

Accordingly, I urge our colleagues to join in support of this worthy measure.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 813.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### AMERICAN LEGION INCORPORATION TECHNICAL CORRECTION

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1377) to amend the act incorporating the American Legion to make a technical correction.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1377

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That section 5 of the Act entitled "An Act to Incorporate the American Legion", approved September 16, 1919 (41 Stat. 285; 36 U.S.C. 45) is amended by striking "December 22, 1961" and inserting "February 28, 1961".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] and the gentleman from New York [Mr. NADLER] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM].

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on S. 1377, the Senate bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Mr. PEASE. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 1377. This is a very simple bill. The purpose of the bill is to expand the American Legion membership eligibility dates for Vietnam-era veterans. It merely changes the dates within the confines of the American Legion Charter.

Under this bill, the commencement date of the Vietnam Conflict in the American Legion Charter will be defined as February 28, 1961, instead of the current date, which is December 22, 1961. February 28 is the date that United States Army advisers first accompanied South Vietnamese troops on patrols.

This modification tracks strictly the dates which the Veterans Administration uses in awarding benefits to Vietnam veterans. I wish to emphasize that the bill even changes the American Legion Charter and has no effect on any benefits paid to Vietnam veterans or any other effect. This bill will have no cost.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] has adequately explained this bill. It is a very simple bill. It does something we certainly should do, to enable those American veterans who served in the Armed Forces after February 28, 1961, when the first American troops accom-

panied South Vietnamese troops on patrol, but prior to December 22, 1961, which is the current date in the current legislation in the incorporating charter of the American Legion, to enable them to join the American Legion. This does track the change Congress made for veterans' benefits. I hope that this bill is unanimously approved.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN].

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in strong support of S. 1377, the American Legion Membership Eligibility Act, which changes the date from which those persons may qualify for veterans' benefits through association with their service during the Vietnam war.

At present, anyone in the service on or before December 22, 1961, qualifies. This bill modifies that date of eligibility to February 28, 1961, and in so doing, codifies the Veterans Administration practice of using the earlier dates and expands the number of veterans eligible for various benefits and for membership in the American Legion.

Accordingly, I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this legislation, which provides eligibility assistance to our veterans who served in the Vietnam war and who seek recognition by the American Legion.

I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] for yielding me the time. I want to commend the gentleman for bringing this measure to the floor at this time.

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of S. 1377. I have introduced an identical bill, H.R. 2835, which expands the Vietnam-era eligibility dates for membership in the American Legion. It is very significant that the House is voting on this veterans bill on the eve of November 11th, Veterans Day. Hopefully this great Nation can remember its veterans throughout the year, not only in November. The American Legion, founded September 16, 1919, is a great service organization and is well deserving of our full support. I urge a favorable vote on this important legislation.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MCCOLLUM] that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1377.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DISAPPROVING CANCELLATIONS  
TRANSMITTED BY PRESIDENT  
OCTOBER 6, 1997

Mr. PACKARD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill